

**Across Oceans, Across Time® ...**  
**Stories from the Family History & Genealogy Center ...**



In the winter of 1886-87 a number of young Wisconsin Central Railroad workers in Waupaca took up a subscription to "furnish a place where young Danish men could congregate without being compelled to seek evil places." Each of the 12 charter members promised to donate whatever English and Danish books he could to form a library and reading room. Quarters were rented, and the first meeting of The Danes Home Society was held on January 6, 1887. Open to all Danish-speaking males of Danish parentage over the age of eighteen, gambling and intoxicating beverages were initially strictly forbidden on the premises. The Society was housed in a variety of buildings until 1894, when the building glimpsed in the photograph above was constructed in a mere 3½ months at a cost of \$7000. At this time the rule against alcohol was rescinded to allow a retail liquor license to be issued. The building then encompassed a coffee-house, restaurant and confectionary room, a dining room, kitchen, 2-story grand ballroom, and living quarters for staff. Since for many years the Danes Home building was the only large meeting hall in Waupaca, it was used for a variety of other purposes, including as a drill room for the local National Guard unit, high school commencement exercises, traveling theatrical productions, and local meetings and conventions. - Although the Society numbered 106 members when the above building was dedicated, membership declined as the 20<sup>th</sup> century progressed. Today the Society is part of Waupaca's history, but its building still proudly stands on Main Street, housing a flourishing antiques business, thanks to the efforts of local restoration and development groups.

Esther Engbretson's memoirs of The Danes Home and supporting materials have recently been donated to the FHGC. Additional material and photographs are welcome.